



CONSUMER ALERT

Don't Cash In: Fake Check Scam Seen in Wisconsin

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MADISON – The Wisconsin Bureau of Consumer Protection is receiving complaints from Wisconsinites who are receiving letters from someone posing as “Reader’s Digest” congratulating them on winning \$500,000 in a Sweepstakes Drawing. The recipient is instructed to cash an enclosed fake check and wire the funds to the sender to cover the processing fees. Supposedly, after the money is wired, the prize will be delivered. It never is.

“Consumers are responsible for the checks they deposit, and criminals take advantage of that by sending out fake checks,” explained Sandy Chalmers, Administrator of DATCP’s Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “It can take weeks for forgery to be discovered. When the check finally bounces, the bank will hold you accountable for the amount.”

Consumer Protection offers these tips to recognize and avoid a fake check scam:

- Throw away any prize offer that asks you to pay money up front. There is no reason to pay to collect sweepstakes winnings.
- If someone you don’t know asks you to wire money, end the transaction immediately. Once the money is wired, it is nearly impossible to reverse the transaction or trace the money.
- If you’re selling something, don’t accept a check for more than the selling price, especially when the buyer asks you to wire back the difference.
- If you accept payment by check, insist that the check be drawn on a local bank. Make a personal visit to the bank and ask if the check is valid.
- Resist pressure to “act now.”

For more information or to file a consumer complaint, visit the Bureau of Consumer Protection’s website at datcp.wisconsin.gov; via e-mail at datcphotline@wisconsin.gov or call toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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